DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 046 CS 505 514

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TITLE Report on a Pilot Project Which Combined Speech Communication and English Composition Instruction.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Curriculum; College English; Core Curriculum; Course Descriptions; Curriculum Development; Drama; *Freshman Composition; Higher Education; Integrated Activities; *Integrated Curriculum; Interdisciplinary Approach; Nonfiction; Oral Interpretation; Poetry; Required Courses; Rhetoric; Short Stories; *Speech Communication; *Speech Curriculum; Speech Instruction; Teaching Methods; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

In reorganizing its core curriculum, Duquesne University (Pennsylvania) created a course that combined the required freshman composition and speech communication courses. A two-term pilot course offered eight hours of credit, meeting for one hour three times a week and for a two hour lab once a week. Oral readings were assigned in order to help improve students' speech communication skills. Homework readings came from "A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers," edited by Lee A. Jacobus, and dealt with rhetorical analysis and the topics of definition, comparison, relationship, and circumstance. Writing assignments were based on four general principles also applicable to oral presentations: (1) essays must have a clearly defined purpose, (2) effective essays are governed by an implicit inner logic that arises out of their subject and purpose, (3) effective essays use rhetorical signposts to make the inner logic explicit, and (4) the process of communication involves every aspect of the final document. The latter half of the course served as an introduction to literature, organized according to modes of expression--lyric, dramatic, and narrative--rather than by literary genre. The course successfully integrated communication and language skills, as indicated by students' essays and discussion groups. (SRT)

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Report On A Pilot Project Which Combined

Speech Communication and English Composition Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

The turn of the century ushered in the present disjunction between speaking and writing which is bureaucratically and pedagogically perpetuated by the separate departments of Communication and English. Duquesne's recent venture into development of a University Core Curriculum presented the opportunity to force collaboration between these now divorced disciplines.

Traditionally, all of Duquesne's students have been required to pass two terms of composition, while the basic speech course has remained an elective. Some faculty from English and Speech Communication recognized the merit in the other's objectives and proposed a pilot project to explore the numerous problems presented by the challenge of requiring basic skills education to our one thousand new students each year, with little or no increase in faculty.

PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES

Coordination

In order to condense and overlap instruction in composition and oral communication, we had to determine our common ground as well as the nature of each discipline's instruction requirements and the most efficient time frame for each.

Because the second term of composition at Duquesne has its starting point in literature, the concept and use of poetic in public speaking had to be reconsidered. The common perspective of the faculty producing the pilot was the Aristotelean view of rhetoric and poetic. This starting point insured that we organized the most essential knowledge for our students and developed a program that would be acceptable to the

faculty of both the departments of English and Communication. A final consideration was the coordination of the instruction with assignments and research so that the students would be in one course on the theory of communication with application in writing and speaking.

Core Parameters

The Core Curriculum Committee which is presently designing a new core for the university had to address the concerns of the professional schools who allow little room for elective courses, as well as the College of Arts and Science which would supply most of the faculty. The Core Committee also determined that all core courses should be interdisciplinary. No courses presently offered would be adjusted for the core. All new courses were required.

The Logistical Arrangement

For several reasons we elected to organize the pilot into a two-term course for eight credits. We not only wanted to give a sense of continuity to the students, but also we wanted to extend the time in which students were exposed to instruction in oral communication to equal that of written communication.

For two terms the class met for one hour three times a week and for a two hour lab once a week. In general, instruction in English took place during two of the one hour meetings while speech instruction occurred one hour per week. Approximately three of every four labs were used for oral communication exercise or for more formal presentation. The fourth lab was utilized for in-class compositions and instruction in library use. The course was taught by a faculty member from the Department of Speech Communication and one from the Department of English. Whenever possible both faculty were present during the instruction lab. We concur, however,

that if such a course were to become a part of the Core Curriculum - that the presence of both would only be necessary in the first year of the team effort with occasional visits in subsequent years. Our compatibility stemmed from our mutually shared territory: rhetoric, poetic and research skills.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH: COMMON GROUND

Our randomly selected students represented the strengths and weaknesses of our undergraduate population in that approximately half of them were capable of producing a fairly well organized informative presentation but few were familiar with the rigors of critical thought. While Duquesne is fairly selective some of our entering students are weak in language skills. This weakness was clearly evident and administered to in the beginning of the second lab period.

The students were surprised with our request for some oral reading --first from several poems which were selected to test students ability to inject suspense, emphasis,and a sense of personality into an oral reading (Lee).[1] They then read from "Four Idols" by Francis Bacon which they had already studied for composition. The first oral readings ranged from lackluster to choppy and poor.

We persisted with the oral readings as the warm-up for most lab periods. We concurred with Aggertt and Bowen that "Practice in interpretative reading should sharpen your diction, improve your voice, facilitate your facial expression and gesture and improve your poise and confidence. Most of all, such study will help you develop the ability to think on your feet under stress." (Aggertt and Bowen, 72).

Our strategy was to develop the basic oral communication skills during the first term and simulate the stressful situation the second term.

By the end of the first term most students had advanced considerably in the art of oral reading as well as extemporaneous speaking.

The students and professors agreed that the regular requirement of the oral readings throughout the year was a critical tactic in our communication skills improvement strategy. While some poetry was used the first term, we concentrated mainly on rhetorical theory through a number of philosophical readings[2] and discussion on the application of theory in Walter and Scott's Thinking and Speaking.

Rhetoric and Poetic

The rhetorical perspective was often presented as a contrast to the poetic in order to clarify the concepts and practices for the students. Of personal interest to us was the fact that the faculty member from the Department of English offered most of the theoretical discussion of rhetoric while the faculty member from Communication contributed most of the poetic thought. In one series of lectures and discussions the Aristotelean concepts of invention, arrangement, delivery and style was presented as a contrast to plot, character, thought, diction, melody and spectacle. The function of rhetoric and poetic was also contrasted in the manner of Hoyt H. Hudson as outlined below.

Rhetoric		Poetry
Subject chosen for the audience	vs.	Audience chosen for the subject
Rhetor's eye is on the audience	vs.	Poet's eye on the subject
Speech is heard by a particular audience	vs.	Poem overheard by select audience
purpose = impressive	vs.	purpose = expressive
effect = persuasion	vs.	effect = pleasure

This kind of contrasting proved to be very worthwhile when the students finally explored the poetic realm and when they were required to combine

the two distinct forms of discourse in a presentation without confusing themselves, the forms, or the audience. Their final oral presentation required that groups of between three to five employ some dramatic scene, role play, and poetry reading in a forty-five minute problem-solution presentation complete with visuals, handouts, and persuasive tactics to sell the solution. The danger in such a task for freshman is that they can involve themselves too much in the drama and role play and ignore the evidence and enthymemes required for a successful rhetorical presentation. In demonstrating that the poetic elements can bring eloquence, grace, excitement and power to the logical proof, we attempted to guide our students into a fuller understanding and use of their language in personal and public expression.

ASSIGNMENTS AND RESEARCH

Composition Assignments

Although the letter of the University Core Curriculum is still under development, its spirit is clear: Courses required of every student in the university must extend beyond the parochial interests of the departments offering them, and must offer intellectual enrichment to students drawn from every area of study. We were able to take advantage of the excellent collection of significant readings contained in A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers, edited by Lee A. Jacobus. We judged this text especially suitable for the course because it is hospitable to the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition upon which both professors draw.

Jacobus' survey of the common topics and their use in rhetorical analysis provided the basis for the first four short papers. Readings were chosen to illustrate the topics of definition, comparison, relationship, and circumstance. After classroom discussion, students were required to employ each of the topics in a brief essay.

Although we took Aristotle as a point of departure it was not our intention to offer a course in applied ancient rhetoric. After everyone had acquired some facility in identifying and using the traditional topics, we felt free to broaden the definition of "invention" in order to deemphasize the close connection between invention and the persuasive ends of classical forensic and deliberative rhetoric.

The arts of invention, as we presented them in this course, are not so much ways of finding arguments in support of a given thesis as they are ways of sharpening the student's interrogation of the world. We hoped to replace the uncomfortable sense of "having to say something" twice a week with the confident feeling of "having something to say."

It has long been common practice to present fledgling writers with a list of the "genres" of expository prose: the personal reminiscence, the character sketch, the process theme, the cause and effect essay, the comparison and contrast, and so on to the number of fifteen or twenty items. Fifteen years experience in teaching freshman writing courses has suggested that this is more an exercise in taxonomy than a useful guide to potential writers. There is a certain kind of mechanical sterility in the proceeding, leading to the abomination known as the "freshman theme."

We determined, from the beginning of our deliberations, to emphasize the unity rather than the diversity of the writing a person is called upon to do during the course of a busy life, and furthermore, to pay particular attention to the elements of communication common to speech and writing.

This approach necessitated a short list of principles rather than a long list of applications. The composition component was organized around four general principles, which proved to be directly and immediately applicable to the oral presentations:

1. Every essay must have a clearly defined purpose.

2. An effective essay is governed by an implicit "inner logic that arises out of subject under discussion and purpose as defined in stage 1.

3. Effective essays use rhetorical signposts to make the inner logic explicit.

4. The process of communication involves every aspect of the final document.

A few brief comments will make scope and import of these principles clear.

1. Although several different purposes can be defined, most writing required by the student or the professional tends to have one of three aims: to survey a body of information, to move the reader to action, or to advance and support a thesis. Many of the other purposes usually cited in the textbooks can more efficiently be taught by considering them as special cases of the three pusposes just enumerated. Thus, process is a subdivision of surveying information, one whose inner logic is dictated by chronology.

2. "Inner logic" is the heading under which we presented all questions of organization. By returning to an earlier discussion of the linear nature of language, it was possible to reduce all questions of organization to questions of sequence. Since words, sentences, and paragraphs can only be placed in one dimensional strings, questions about organization can always be reduced to variations upon one basic question: "Why are the topics treated in the order in which they are treated?" and its correlative: "What is the best way to order the topics at hand?"

In practice we found that students were able to use the brainstorming developed in speech sessions to generate lists of potential aspects

of a subject. Students soon came to realize that the items from the list could dictate altogether different inner logics: the same materials could be organized chronologically, in order of ascending or descending importance or impact, or, indeed, in ways yet unthought of.

Identifying organization according to space, time, cause, effect, etc., as matters of inner logic, rather than as separate genres of exposition makes it clear to the student that he is learning one art, not several; and that the various modes of that art do not come from a list that he has memorized, but arise naturally and inevitably out of "what he has to say."

3. Once the concept of inner logic is made clear, the third principle is mastered very quickly. Students readily discover that the mysteries of transition and coherence can be replaced by the plain and practical expedient of insuring that the reader is given all the information he needs to reconstruct the inner logic that guided the writer.

4. By developing the standard sender/receiver model of communication, and applying it specifically to public speech and expository academic prose, a host of disparate problems is brought under one rubric: errors in spelling and grammar, infelicities of diction, dirty typewriter keys, non-standard paper, and intrusive references to the writer at all seen as impediments to clear communication. We found that students surrendered many of their defensive postures with respect to errors, when they learned to see them not as blunders for which they were punished but as spurious signals that distract the reader/listener from the message and redirect attention to the code, the channel, or the sender.

The HOPE system

These four principles were developed over a period of several weeks in the classroom. The following easily learned mnemonic reduces them to their elements, and emphasizes their generality and simplicity.

H - Have something to say

O - Organize it

P - Point out the organization

E - Everything (that doesn't advance your purpose works against it.

The Second Term

The university guidelines for the core curriculum imposed two requirements on the second term of our proposed course: it had to fulfill the traditional function of the freshman composition course and serve as an introduction to literature; it was also required to be a genuinely new course. In the face of these almost contradictory mandates, we considered several approaches. The course as finally designed gained its novelty by stressing the intimate connection between written literature and the spoken word.

To accomplish this it was necessary to free the course from the traditional division by literary genres. We adopted a "pre-generic" approach, in which the readings were grouped and assigned not by form or genre (poetry, novel, dramatic monologue, etc.), but by the modes of expression they exemplified.

A portion of the course was devoted to each of three modes: the lyric, the dramatic, and the narrative. In each section students studied prose, verse, and drama.

The readings for the lyric section were drawn predominately from lyric poetry, but we attempted to make it clear that lyricism was more a matter of adopting a voice than of choosing a form.

The experience of carefully coached oral presentation during the first term prepared the students for a thorough, and quite sophisticated introduction to the non-lexical resources of the English language. They were more alert to the nuances of tone and verbal color than comparable students without previous instruction in speech/oral reading and were interested in analyzing the precise mechanisms by which poets shape and manipulate audience response.

The initial presentation of lyric poetry as a species of sensory experience, rather than a more remote intellectual pleasure, also had the fortuitous effect of markedly lowering resistance to poetry. Short lyrics provided an ideal workshop for demonstrating how much of the meaning of a poetic line depends on things other than the meaning of the words. Our students were able to read aloud with some confidence and, by emphasizing the degree to which poetry employs, exploits, and heightens the devices of ordinary speech we felt we were able to overcome a good deal of the acculturated antipathy to poetry that one usually finds in a class of beginning university students.

Attention to the motives behind the lyrical heightening of ordinary language made it easy to trace the lyric impulse in prose, both ancient and modern. To provide an example: the richly cadenced meditations of the seventeenth-century divine, Jeremy Taylor, appear, not as documents in the history of English prose style, but as instances of the lyrical

mode, which seems almost accidentally to have expressed itself in prose. The lyric mode also serves its turn in modern prose: in the rich descriptive tapestries of Conrad, in the many voices of Joyce, and even in the trenchant social criticism of Ursula K. LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

In drama the lyric mode is even readier to hand in the poetic drama from Marlow to MacLeish, which we did employ, and in the prose of Synge or Dylan Thomas which we did not, but which will surely be included in the syllabus the next time around.

We presented the lyric mode first because it provided an opportunity to explore the very building blocks of the spoken word. For the mirror of speech on a larger scale we turned to the dramatic mode. The dramatic, like the lyric, overflows the confines of any single literary genre. The philosophical dialogues of Plato, the dramatic monologues of Browning or Eliot, and the spare drama of a Hemingway short story have as much to teach about the essence of dramatic interaction as have the plays of the major dramatists.

University students most often begin their study of literature with the short story. By reversing the order and treating the narrative mode last, we felt we could build a much stronger case for the interdependence of speaking and writing. The emotional intensity of the lyric, and the conversational spontaneity of the drama (however contrived it might be) are much more immediately related to the prosaic world of our daily speech than is the premeditated artistry of the story teller.

The narrative mode, like the other modes, is not restricted by the forms it takes. Between the folk ballad, pared and polished to the essence

of the story it has to tell, and the agonizingly elaborate articulation of a novel by Henry James, there is a kinship. The narrative focus of the course was on the similarities among the various narrative arts, rather than the differences. A short story by Joyce that had earlier served as the focus for a discussion of lyricism was given a second look for the quantitites it shared with a narrative poem.

Speech Assignments and Research

The first term was designed to lead the students into an understanding of the rhetorical perspective of the social and political world while they worked on the development of basic speaking skills. Their first two assignments required short informative speeches in response to the following questions:

1. What is the most important thing that you learned in the past year?
2. If a talent is the element without which you would not be you, what is your distinguishing talent and how does it work for you and for others?

While the students were learning the basics of extemporaneous speaking through lab production and critique (without grades), they were also receiving one lecture per week on the more theoretical aspects of rhetoric from the speech communication perspective. Considerable attention was given to logical thinking and the construction of enthymemes, rhetorical and non-rhetorical situations, (Bitzer); the basis of evidence and credibility, (Newman) and (McBurney) and the rhetoric of problem solving (Walter).

The first term ended with a modest research assignment on a famous speech and speaker which culminated in a reading of the speech prefaced with a historical overview and observations on the rhetorical aspects of the situation.

The second term began with a persuasive value speech assignment which was started in the first term. In this way we could encourage students to conduct some information interviews over the semester break. The students returned almost totally prepared to present their speeches--which lent a unique sense of quickened pace and accomplishment to an otherwise preparitory January.

On the theoretical side, we discussed the distinction between dialectic and rhetoric observed by Richard M. Weaver in his analysis of the scopes evolution trial (Weaver, 27-30). Weaver's distinctions between dialectic and rhetoric are outlined below:

Dialectic	Rhetoric
--world of possibility	--world of actuality
--defines subject through propositions making up some coherent discourse	--instills belief and action
--example: law against teaching evolution in school	--intersects possibility with actuality--the imperative
	--examples: illegal act good reasons for breaking the law

Hudson's previous distinctions between rhetoric and poetic were reviewed to reestablish the clarity of the categories. We began to consider that some poems might function like a sermon that was designed to inspire but without a direction or specific outcome required. In a discussion of poets and

some poetic preachers, Hudson hinted that the line between rhetoric and poetic can become confused when great preachers venture into poetry. Hudson had said that the poet "may even think of all mankind of the present and future as his audience," as do many preachers (Hudson, 148). In this view, the language used in the poem must avail itself of a very mixed audience.

The poet-preacher is one who composes from a particular religious perception of reality--perception which is focused from a consciously arrived at "vision" of the way mankind should order its actions. This particular "vision" is the ordering principle behind the preacher's rhetoric or sermon. He consciously designs his sermon to persuade his audience to act in a particular manner. This vision does not leave the preacher when he becomes a poet-preacher. Nor is the poet-preacher singing a song of himself to himself--not caring whether or not he is overheard--though the same individual may do that as a poet. The poet-preacher, while not confined by the dictates of an occasion, must, in some way, want to be heard because the end of his poetry is the "enlightenment" of mankind.

Should the poetry of a poet-preacher be placed under the categories of rhetoric or poetry as defined by Hudson? I suggested to the students that we establish a category for rhetorical poetry, which is the product of a perception that is focused by an adhered to "vision" of a particular order of reality and composed by the author for the audience for all mankind, for the enlightenment of mankind, present and future.

Below is a criteria which extends Hudson's model to a more specific rhetorical group who produce visionary poetry such as much of Daniel Berrigan's born again verse.

Criteria for Rhetorical Poetry

1. Audience is all mankind
2. Subject perceived through a particular adhered to "vision"
3. To be heard by all mankind
4. Expressive-perceptive (rendering a particular perception)
5. Effect = enlightenment

(Friday, 1983)

The distinction between the forms of discourse were at least temporarily strained with an examination of Daniel Berrigan's defense at the trial of the Catonsville Nine. (Friday) This award winning poet defended illegal acts against a dialected position. The twist came when Berrigan injected poetry into his defense testimony. Was it still poetry? Did poetry become rhetoric?

The poem:

Children in the Shelter

Imagine; three of them.
As though survival
were at a rat's word,
And a rat's end
waited there at the end
And I must have
in the century's boneyard
left of flesh and bone in my arms
I picked up the littlest
a boy, his face
breaded with rice (his sister calmly feeding him
as we climbed down)
In may arms fathered
in a moment's grace, the messiah
of all tears, I bore, reborn
a Hiroshima child from hell.

--Transcript p. 703

The above poem was not a justification for Berrigan's actions at Catonsville; it was not a call to action; it did not contain logical argument or enthymemes. Yet the poem functioned well within the rhetorical discourse. It rendered well a scene in the bomb shelter as the reduction of human existance in the sub-survival suffering of a child in a war zone. And, the students' confusion grew.

A final note from "A Defense of Poetry" by Shelley seemed to the students to move some poetry closer to the category of rhetoric, or possibly dialectic. Said Shelley,

> It (poetry) awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. . .a man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. . .Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight. . .Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man. . .

The investigation into the distinctive natures and functions of Rhetoric and Poetic led the students from the oblivion through confusion into clarification. Their final speeches (mentioned earlier) were remarkable blends of poetic intensity and rhetorical strategy.

SHORTCOMINGS AND PROBLEMS

In this course, as in any pilot program, it was necessary to make a few mid-course corrections, to abandon a few cherished assumptions, and occasionally to acknowledge a failure. We found, for example that we had seriously underestimated the difficulty students would have in reading closely reasoned prose. Their difficulties with Bacon and Machiavelli made it impossible to maintain the pace we had anticipated

in the first term. The bright side of this distressing revelation, however, was that their problems led us to attempt a successful technique that we might otherwise never have considered: oral interpretation of philosophical prose as if it were imaginative literature. Our initial exercise enabled us to discover and attend to some basic reading problems such as ignoring punctuation, reading words that were not in the text,or mispronouncing new words. Further on the interpretations became meaning enhancement sessions in which pause and inflection was discovered after several students attempted the same passage.

Both instructors were reluctant to sacrifice any of the content of the equivalent courses that they customarily taught. This proved unrealistic, although not detrimental. Spreading the content of a one semester speech course over two semesters occasionally made it difficult to maintain the same sense of continuity experienced by students in the traditional three credit public speaking course. However, the sense of integration of general communication/language skills announced and demonstrated by the students overshadowed any difficulties. The decision to emphasize the aural and oral dimensions of literature made it necessary to jettison some hallowed literary and intellectual history. On the other hand, the great speeches/speakers approach in the first term served to expand student awareness into territory rarely explored in the basic performance course.

CONCLUSION

The most impressive fusion of the two disciplines probably appeared in those essays, including a final examination, in which students were assigned a topic and given twenty to forty minutes for group discussion before writing. As a result of their speech training, they were willing to enter into a group discussion and were able to do so productively. The essays they wrote at the end of both terms were distinguished by the variety of insights that students displayed, by the extent to which the discussions enabled students to bring prior learning and experience to bear on the assigned topic, and by the uniformly sound and clear organization of essays that produced in an examination period in which actual writing was substantially reduced by the time given to discussion.

As a final note to those concerned with student retention; a serendipitous result of weaving one group through the labyrinth of two courses for two terms was strong group identity and friendship. Our class became a recognizable group both on campus and off.

Notes

1. "The 38" by Ted Joans, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes and Ulysses by Tennyson were selected from Oral Interpretation by Charlotte Lee (See references) who has an abundance of useful methods for helping the student develop an awareness of the richness of language.

2. Selections from the following works were assigned as regular out of class reading and were then utilized for inclass oral reading. Bacon: "The Four Idols," Aristotle: "The Aim of Man," Nietzsche: Apollonianism and Dionysianism, King: Letter from the Birmingham jail, Machiavelli: Qualities of the Prince, Kuhn: The Essential Tension, Thoreau: A Plea for Captain John Brown.

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